

Learning the Ropes

Marines tangle with ROK Marines

Marines of the 3rd Marine Division

scaled walls, hurdled obstacles and patrolled mountain trails alongside their Republic of Korea Marine counterparts recently at the South Korean mountain warfare training center owned by the 2nd ROK Marine Division.

< **Lance Cpl. Mark Roberson**, a forward observer for Weapons Company, listens as a ROK Marine instructor teaches him to tie a knot.

Photo by Lance Cpl. John D. Cranford



The training for 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, currently on the Unit Deployment Program as part of 4th Marine Regiment, was part of exercise known as Korea Integrated Training Program 04-1.

The training package consisted of four training days and included two days of rope tying, obstacle courses and rappelling. The other two training days consisted of mountain patrols and offensive and defensive positions on mountain terrain.

This gave the Marines an opportunity to participate in training they didn't

usually do, said Sgt. Chris K. Anderson, rifleman for C Company, 1/3.

"Training in the mountainous terrain is somewhat different than what we are used to," the Chico, Calif., native said. "Even if we knew how to tie certain knots, we were able to learn the ways the ROK Marines tie knots."

Each morning began with a strenuous physical training session led by ROK Marines. Even though Marines are known for their strength and abilities, they said it was difficult and tiring.

After PT, the Marines geared up and set out for their first day of rope

training. They learned how to tie basic knots first and then moved on to the advanced. By the end of the class they were able to tie a harness they could use for many activities such as rappelling and rock climbing.

Then they began tackling the obstacles one-by-one. Climbing rocks, traveling across numerous rope bridges and rappelling took its toll on most of the Marines, but all were proud when they finished each obstacle and learned something new.

"Most people don't know exactly which muscles they need to build,"

▲ **Cpl. James W. Brandon**, a mortar man for Weapons Company and an Oklahoma City native, crosses a one-rope bridge at the ROK Mountain Warfare Training Center.

Photo by Lance Cpl. John D. Cranford

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OBSTACLE COURSE SAFETY FROM THE NAVAL SAFETY CENTER

- 1** **Inspect obstacle course** for possible dangers or damage each day before training.
- 2** **Loosen up the mulch in the landing area** of each obstacle before running the course. Mulch should be loosened up throughout the day if a large number of Marines are using the course.
- 3** **Have two separate means of communication available** in case of emergencies.
- 4** **Bring potable water** and ensure Marines remain hydrated throughout the training period. During warm weather ensure Marines are hydrated before the training begins.
- 5** **A qualified corpsman with an emergency vehicle should be present for the training event** with at least the minimum equipment of a backboard, splints, neck brace, oxygen and a first aid kit.
- 6** **All Marines should be physically able to undergo the training.** Two weeks of conditioning training are recommended before tackling the obstacle course.
- 7** **Explain and demonstrate** to Marines **the proper techniques** for each obstacle before they begin the course.
- 8** **Marines should warm up** and perform stretching exercises before starting the obstacle course.
- 9** **Be aware of adverse weather conditions**, as they increase the hazard factors and take these conditions into consideration when making the decision to run the course.
- 10** **A good rule of thumb for a student to instructor ratio is 10 to one.** There is no written guideline for the ratio, but it ensures there is adequate control and supervision throughout the training event.

More information about training safety can be found at the Naval Safety Center Web site at <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/ashore/highrisktraining/usmcresources.htm>.

▼ **Two Marines step off the ledge** to begin their journey down the rappel wall while two ROK Marines wait below to catch them if they slip. The U.S. and ROK Marines worked together through each obstacle to ensure success.

Photo by Lance Cpl. John D. Cranford



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Anderson said. “Going through these obstacles was a reality check for most and let the Marines know exactly what they need to work on.”

The Marines used their basic infantry skills during the mountainous terrain training. Although much like the jungles they were used to, they still learned a lot from the experience.

“One of the main things we learned was communication,” said 1st Lt. Matt R. Mueller, 2nd Platoon, C Co. commander. “A lot of the hand and arm signals the ROK Marines use is different than ours.”

“The course was both mentally and physically rewarding because it takes a lot of endurance to deal with the obstacles the ROK Marines threw at us, but each Marine had fun and learned from the experience,” Anderson said. **M**

RAPPELLING SAFETY TIPS

- 1 Ensure loose **clothing and equipment** are secured.
- 2 **Position combat equipment** so it does not interfere with rappeller's brake hand.
- 3 **Wear heavy-duty gloves.**
- 4 **Wear Kevlar helmets** with chinstrap fastened.
- 5 **Ensure belayer is on rope** before rappelling.
- 6 **Belayer should not wear gloves,** should keep both hands on the rope at all times and should always face the rappeller.
- 7 **Always remember rappelling is potentially dangerous,** do not become overconfident or careless.

Safety tips compiled from the Army TC 21-24 Rappelling manual.
<http://www.adtdl.army.mil/cgi-bin/atdl.dll/tc/21-24/toc.htm>



▲ **Cpl. Jared Buchner**, a javelin gunner for Weapons Company and Arlington, Wash., native, swings across the monkey bars during the obstacle course at the ROK Mountain Warfare Training Center.

Photo by Lance Cpl. John D. Cranford